 --29. A computer-based recording, storage and playback station for recording, storing and playing multimedia content programs, said station comprising:

means for receiving encoded multimedia content programs and associated content information transmitted from a content provider, said content information including content availability, scheduling and content pricing data, and said encoded content including a combination of time-based code keys to provide authorization for playing back recorded multimedia content programs;

multimedia content display device for enabling a customer to view available multimedia content programs and associated information including scheduling and pricing data;

interactive means providing a program guide via said multimedia content display device for enabling customers to select available multimedia content programs and associated information and to select functions for recording multimedia content and functions for playback of said content via a suitable multimedia content playback device;

a decoder device for receiving and decoding said selected multimedia content programs;

a recording and content playback device for receiving said selected multimedia content programs and recording said multimedia content programs in a storage media device, said interactive means enabling a customer to initiate playback of said stored multimedia content program at a desired time;

control means verifying a received combination of said time-based code keys for authorizing play-back of said multimedia content via said multimedia content display device at said desired time, and enabling said playback.

30. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station as claimed in Claim 29, wherein said control means generates viewed-content information associated with those multimedia content programs played back by a customer, said station further including: means for communicating generated viewed-content information from each said customer household to a central billing system to verify that a selected, recorded movie has been played back for viewing, said central billing system receiving said generated viewed-content information and generating a bill to charge each customer household for every viewing of selected, recorded multimedia content program content.

31. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station as claimed in Claim 30, wherein said multimedia content is encoded with a first time-based code key associated with said multimedia content and valid for a pre-determined time duration.

32. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station as claimed in Claim 31, wherein said multimedia content is periodically encoded with a second time-based code key correlated with said first time-based code key and valid for a pre-determined time period.

33. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station as claimed in Claim 32, further comprising means for receiving a third time-based code key from said billing system for identifying a status of said customer for a predefined time period, said control means verifying a received combination of said first, second and third time-based code keys for enabling play-back of said multimedia content.

34. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station as claimed in Claim 32, further comprising means for communicating an identity of said multimedia content and a unique identifying address associated with said customer to said central billing system upon initiating the play-back of multimedia content, said central billing system responsive to said communication for generating a third time-based code key for identifying a status of said customer, and communicating said third time-based code key back to said customer to enable said play-back of said multimedia content.

35. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 32, wherein the first time-based code key is encoded into the transmitted multimedia content and said second time-based key codes are blanket transmitted to all customer households.

36. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 29, wherein said storage media device includes a DVD device having a write/read mechanism for recording and playback of movies or other multimedia content.

37. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 30, wherein said communication means includes a modem means for transmitting data over a telephone line.

38. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 30, wherein said central billing system utilizes said identity of said multimedia content to credit accounts of content providers providing said content.

39. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 30, wherein said interactive means provides an interactive program guide including links to view a preview of the multimedia content.

40. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 39, wherein said preview are obtained through a direct Internet access link to a website of the video content provider.

41. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 30, wherein said received multimedia content is transmitted from a content provider by a means selected from a group comprising: an optical cable, cable/modem transmission, Internet connection, a telephone connection, or satellite-based transmission (DBS), or a combination thereof.

42. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 29, wherein said multimedia content programs and associated content information is transmitted via DBS in encoded VHS resolution.

43. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 41, wherein said multimedia content is transmitted in real time or time compressed speed.

44. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 37, wherein said communication means enables customer access to said interactive means from remote locations to preselect movies for subsequent viewing.

45. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 36, wherein said DVD device includes multiple disks each comprising recorded stored multimedia content, said disks stored in one of a multiple disc platter, or stacked disk format to enable user access to multiple stored multimedia content.

46. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 41, wherein said multimedia content includes movies.

47. The computer-based recording, storage and playback station of claim 41, wherein said multimedia content includes music or other audio content in digital form.

48. A method for recording, storing and playing multimedia content comprising the steps of:

a) receiving multimedia content programs and associated content information transmitted from a content provider, said content information including content availability, scheduling and content pricing data, said received content encoded with a combination of time-based code keys to provide authorization for playing back recorded multimedia content programs;

b) generating a program guide via an audiovisual display device for enabling a customer to view and select available multimedia content programs and associated information and to select functions for recording multimedia content and functions for playback of said content via a suitable playback device;

c) decoding received selected multimedia content programs;

d) receiving said selected multimedia content programs and recording said multimedia content programs in a storage media device;

e) enabling a customer to initiate playback of stored multimedia content program at a desired time;

f) verifying a received combination of said time-based code keys for authorizing playback of said multimedia content via said audiovisual display device at said desired time to enable said playback.


49. The method as claimed in Claim 48, further including the steps of:

generating viewed-content information associated with a multimedia content program played back by a customer;


communicating said generated viewed-content information from each said customer household to a central billing system to verify that a selected, recorded movie has been played back for viewing, said central billing system receiving said generated viewed-content information; and

said central billing system generating a bill to charge each customer household for each viewing of selected, recorded multimedia content program content.

50. The method as claimed in Claim 49, wherein prior to step a), the step of encoding said multimedia content with a first time-based code key associated with said multimedia content and valid for a pre-determined time duration.

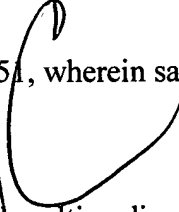
 51. The method as claimed in Claim 50, wherein prior to step a), the step of periodically encoding said multimedia content with a second time-based code key correlated with said first time-based code key and valid for a pre-determined time period.

52. The method as claimed in Claim 51, wherein said verifying step f) includes the steps of:

 receiving a third time-based code key from said billing system based on a good-standing status of said customer; and,

correlating said first, second and third time-based code keys to enable play-back of said multimedia content.

53. The method as claimed in Claim 51, wherein said verifying step f) includes the steps of:

 communicating an identity of said multimedia content and a unique identifying address associated with said customer to said central billing system upon initiating the play-back of multimedia content;

said central billing system generating a third time-based code key based on a good-standing status of said customer in response to receipt of said communication;

communicating said third time-based code key back to said customer; and,

correlating said first, second and third time-based code keys to enable play-back of said multimedia content.

54. The method of claim 51 wherein the first time-based code key is encoded into the transmitted multimedia content and said second time-based key codes are blanket transmitted to all customer households.

55. The method of claim 48, wherein said recording step d) includes implementing a DVD device having a write/read mechanism for recording and playback of movies or other multimedia content.

56. The method of claim 49, wherein said step of communicating said generated viewed-content information includes transmitting data over a telephone line.

57. The method of claim 49, further including the step of: enabling said central billing system to utilize said identity of said multimedia content to credit accounts of content providers providing said content.

58. The method of claim 49, wherein said step of generating a program guide via an audiovisual display device includes: providing an interactive program guide including links to view a preview of the multimedia content.



59. The method of claim 58, wherein said step of providing an interactive program guide includes obtaining said preview through a direct Internet access link to a website of the video content provider.

60. The method of claim 49, wherein prior to step a) of receiving multimedia content programs, the step of: transmitting said multimedia content from a content provider by a method selected from a group comprising: an optical cable, cable/modem transmission, Internet connection, a telephone connection, or satellite-based transmission (DBS), or a combination thereof.

61. The method of claim 48, further including encoding said multimedia content programs and associated content information in VHS resolution.

62. The method of claim 60, further including transmitting said multimedia content in one of: real time or time compressed speed.

63. The method of claim 56, wherein said step b) of generating a program guide via an audiovisual display device includes the step of: enabling a customer to view and select available multimedia content programs from remote locations to preselect movies for subsequent viewing. --